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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 10 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bowler ..... (Malawi)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 54: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/70/13, A/70/13/Add.1, A/70/379, A/70/308, A/70/340 and A/70/319)

1. **Mr. de Aguiar Patriota** (Brazil) said that UNRWA had shown unwavering commitment to assisting Palestine refugees over the past 65 years, but faced ever-growing challenges, including attacks on its facilities and personnel during the 2014 war in Gaza, an unprecedented financial crisis resulting from the widening gap between limited resources and rising demands, and a recent upsurge in tensions between Israelis and Palestinians, all of which added further strain to the Agency's difficult work.

2. The situation in the Gaza Strip, with 100,000 Palestinians remaining displaced since the 2014 hostilities, the continuing suffocating blockade and unfulfilled reconstruction-funding pledges, was alarming. Youth unemployment in Gaza was at 70 per cent and GDP per capita had fallen by $400 since 2005. As confirmed by the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council, persistent poverty rates were a significant challenge to Palestine's development. Under such difficult circumstances, UNRWA played a crucial role not only in providing humanitarian assistance but also in promoting stability.

3. Brazil had recently increased its cooperation with UNRWA through voluntary financial contributions and bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Trust Fund contributions towards reconstruction of medical facilities damaged during the 2014 Gaza conflict. Brazil was honoured to have joined the UNRWA Advisory Commission and looked forward to further expanding its cooperation with the Agency.

4. Calling on the international community to step up efforts to reach a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he emphasized that peace and security in the region could only be achieved by ending the occupation and implementing the two-State solution. Until then, Brazil would continue to fulfil its duty to support UNRWA and assist the Palestinian population.

5. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Venezuela) said that despite its budgetary difficulties, UNRWA had worked tirelessly to assist the 5.5 million Palestine refugees who were continually denied their right of return as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 194 (III). Nevertheless, the Agency had been created as a temporary assistance mechanism pending a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and should not be viewed as a solution to the plight of the Palestine refugees.

6. Resolving the Palestinian humanitarian crisis was inextricably linked to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as that would allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination. Israel must therefore end its illegal occupation of the territories belonging to the State of Palestine, in line with Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and cease its construction of settlements and demolition of Palestinian homes.

7. Demand for UNRWA assistance was increasing as a result of heightened Israeli violence in the Palestinian territories and the turmoil brought by terrorist groups to neighbouring countries. Despite recent additional contributions from Arab States, Agency resources continued to dwindle. His delegation therefore called on the international community to increase financial support for UNRWA so that it could fulfil its mandate.

8. His Government condemned Israel's policy of repression, which included political persecution, arrests, torture, summary executions and deliberate acts of violence against Palestinian civilians, including children, all of which was in violation of international law. It also condemned Israel's indiscriminate attacks on Gaza in July 2014, during which UNRWA schools had been bombed and many civilians, including 11 Agency staff, had been killed. The perpetrators of those war crimes must be held accountable in accordance with international law, and Israel must take no further action compromising the integrity, safety and neutrality of UNRWA personnel.

9. His Government reiterated its support for the request of the State of Palestine to establish a system of international protection guaranteeing the security and physical integrity of Palestinian civilians throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories, pursuant to Security Council resolution 904 (1994) and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention).

10. Military aggression and the eight-year blockade of Gaza had crippled its economy, causing extreme poverty, high rates of unemployment and a sense of hopelessness among the youth population. To remedy that situation, the blockade must be lifted and the

international community must honour its pledges to aid reconstruction in the Gaza Strip.

11. As peace in the Middle East would not be achieved until a definitive solution was found to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he called on the parties to reinitiate negotiations on a robust and lasting settlement and reiterated his Government's support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination under a free, sovereign and independent State based on the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 181 (II).

12. Mr. Çevik (Turkey) said that UNRWA was at the forefront of efforts to protect the rights, dignity and identity of Palestine refugees and continued to be one of the few sources of hope for millions of Palestinians struggling for survival in the direst conditions. However, the Agency's operations were being severely encumbered, not only by Israel's ongoing and unpunished attacks, incursions and other illegal practices, but also by the destructive developments in the region, such as the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, which had further exacerbated the plight of Palestine refugees. Faced with such challenges, the efforts of UNRWA to prevent an even worse humanitarian situation deserved the highest praise.

13. Severe funding shortages, combined with rising instability and displacement in the region, had left the Agency barely able to cope with demand for its vital services. Deploring the Agency's recent and unprecedented financial crisis, which had threatened to deprive half a million Palestine refugee children of access to education, Turkey called for efforts to prevent such situations in the future, especially given the importance of education in enhancing the human capital of Palestine refugees and thus contributing to the achievement of peace.

14. His delegation was concerned about Israeli security procedures and tight restrictions on the movement of people, goods and services, in addition to the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip and the devastation caused by Israeli military action in 2014, all of which had significantly compromised the ability of UNRWA to carry out its work.

15. Despite the measures taken in recent years, a change of approach was needed to secure sustained and predictable financing for the Agency, including through long-term financial commitments by Member States, implementation of innovative funding mechanisms, and expansion of the Agency's donor base. Turkey welcomed the contributions of both traditional and new donors to UNRWA and strongly encouraged the international community to redouble its efforts to enable the Agency to effectively respond to the needs of over 5 million Palestine refugees. For its part, Turkey had increased its contributions to UNRWA, having donated $369 million of official development assistance over the past decade, in addition to its pledge of $200 million at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza. Turkey was also sending in-kind and emergency assistance through the Agency and would continue its existing projects to supply humanitarian aid and essential services to Palestine refugees.

16. Given that the plight of the Palestine refugees could only be addressed by ending the occupation of their land, urgent action was needed to reach a negotiated political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on two States living in peace and security within the pre-1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. Turkey would continue to cooperate with its international partners to support the Palestinian people in their quest for peace, prosperity and dignity.

17. Mr. Forés Rodríguez (Cuba) said that his Government was a staunch defender of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, who had long been the victims of Israeli aggression. The United Nations had a significant role to play in protecting those rights, including the rights of return and of self-determination. One year after Israel's recent major military assault on the Gaza Strip, the situation on the ground was deteriorating: Palestinians were living in insecurity, poverty and dependence on international aid, and barely a day passed without media reports of the death or detention of Palestinian citizens, predominantly women, children and the elderly. The Israeli Government continued to restrict the freedom of movement of goods and people, including UNRWA staff and materials, and violate the immunity of UNRWA staff and premises. Israel must end its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories, lift the blockade on Gaza immediately and unconditionally, and allow unrestricted movement of goods, people and humanitarian assistance across Gaza's borders.

18. Given that the Agency's perpetual budget shortfall hampered its capacity to carry out emergency-response

and other essential programmes, his Government urged the donor community to fulfil its pledges to UNRWA. Cuba would maintain its unwavering support for the Palestinian people's struggle to exercise their inalienable right of self-determination and establish their own independent, sovereign State on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

19. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that the international community must ensure that UNRWA could carry out its vital development work, of importance equal to that of its humanitarian efforts, in a continuous and sustainable manner. A crisis similar to that of 2014, when it had faced the possibility of being unable to open its schools on time, must not be allowed to reoccur. The receipt of development services was a right, not a privilege, of Palestine refugees, especially in light of the continuing historical injustices they were enduring. The provision of such services was also of paramount importance in combating terrorism and extremist ideology. Account must also be taken of the increasing challenges UNRWA faced as a result of the multiple crises in the Middle East, the rising costs of providing services such as health care, and the natural increase in the number of Palestine refugees.

20. Lastly, it was important not to lose focus on the root cause of the issue. The international community must do everything within its power to find a just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine, which must include a just solution to the refugee issue based on the relevant international resolutions.

21. **Mr. Al-Hashimi** (Qatar) said that the suffering of Palestine refugees would continue until a just solution to their plight was reached. The Agency's work was indispensable, not only in providing basic services to refugees and guaranteeing their basic human rights but also in contributing to progress towards peace in the Middle East. It was therefore of great concern that the Agency's budget shortfall hampered its ability to fulfil its functions, as highlighted by the recent funding crisis which had threatened to prevent UNRWA schools from reopening for the 2015 school year. The Agency's limited resources were further stretched as it strived to provide shelter to hundreds of thousands of civilians who had been displaced as a result of the most recent Israeli assault on Gaza, where the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate and the blockade remained in force. Urgent action was needed to overcome the Agency's current untenable financial situation, as highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, refugee host countries, members of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, and the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA.

22. Reiterating the responsibility of the international community towards Palestine refugees, he expressed gratitude to all donors, whom he urged to increase their contributions to UNRWA. Qatar, for its part, had responded to the Agency's urgent appeal for donations in 2014 by pledging $5 million to support UNRWA activities and programmes over the following five years, particularly in the area of education and school reconstruction. At the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, Qatar had announced an additional pledge of $1 billion, which constituted half the funding required for the United Nations Support Plan for the Transformation of the Gaza Strip following the destruction of its infrastructure, public institutions and thousands of homes. Qatar was highly appreciative of the efforts of UNRWA staff, who worked in difficult and dangerous conditions to provide essential assistance to Palestine refugees.

23. **Mr. Ben Sliman** (Tunisia) said that his country commended UNRWA for its exemplary work, which was carried out under extremely difficult conditions, and the cooperation of host countries with the Agency. UNRWA continued to face severe challenges, most notably its dire financial situation: the Agency's financial difficulties and the growing demand for assistance were limiting its capacity to meet the basic needs of Palestine refugees and could lead to the complete cessation of its services. Strong and determined action was needed from the international community to help UNRWA overcome its financial difficulties so as to implement its mandate in a timely and efficient manner.

24. The root cause of the Palestine refugee problem and the broader Palestinian question was the Israeli occupation, which continued to have a negative impact on the lives of Palestine refugees in camps. Israeli policies and practices, which denied Palestine refugees their basic rights, had bred a profound sense of frustration, hopelessness and despair in the West Bank and Gaza. Continuing incursions by Israeli forces into refugee camps, which had already resulted in several refugees being shot dead, and the persistent Israeli aggression against Palestinian people, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant Security Council resolutions, must be stopped.

25. The enormity of the task ahead called for strengthened support for UNRWA in order to meet the critical needs of Palestine refugees and for a firm commitment by the international community to work towards a just, lasting and comprehensive solution that complied with the Charter, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

26. **Mr. Sharoni** (Israel) said that UNRWA and Israel had jointly coordinated hundreds of projects providing essential services to the Palestinian people since the creation of the Agency in 1949. Israel recognized the Agency's important contribution to the welfare of Palestine refugees and their descendants and abided by the understandings expressed in the 1967 Comay-Michelmore exchange of letters. However, his Government strongly opposed the Agency's political agenda.

27. Despite the Agency's mandate to decrease the number of refugees, the number under its care had ballooned from a few hundred thousand at the time of its establishment to over 5 million. In contrast, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR) had helped tens of millions of people around the world restart their lives and provide a better future for the next generation. According to UNHCR, a person should lose refugee status upon becoming a citizen of another country, yet that principle was not applied to Palestine refugees.

28. It was regrettable that UNRWA continued to fail to meet the standards of balanced reporting and neutrality expected of United Nations bodies. The Agency was quick to condemn Israel but avoided mentioning Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups by name in its public reports and statements, even though it was well known that Hamas frequently obstructed humanitarian efforts, had repeatedly endangered the lives of Palestinian civilians and had committed war crimes against Israeli civilians. Furthermore, recent reports of UNRWA staff allegedly inciting and advocating Palestinian violence on social media were particularly alarming in light of the recent terrorist attacks that had killed 19 Israeli citizens and injured almost 200. Israel expected UNRWA to abide by the same standards of accountability and transparency that it expected of other parties, and therefore called for an immediate, independent and transparent inquiry into those serious acts of incitement, a prompt account of the investigation, and information concerning any disciplinary measures that might ensue. Another concern was the promotion by the Agency's education system of a harmful, one-sided narrative amongst Palestinian children that the only possible solution was the so-called claim of return.

29. While Hamas was doing everything in its power to prevent reconstruction in Gaza, Israel was working with UNRWA to address humanitarian issues in the area. Hundreds of vehicles carrying goods entered Gaza every day from Israel, which had facilitated the provision of millions of tons of equipment, materials and supplies for reconstruction efforts over the past year. The Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (A/70/13) made little mention of the Agency's dialogue and cooperation with the Israeli Government, but gave the Assad regime credit for its facilitation of the Agency's work in the Syrian Arab Republic. There was also a disproportionate focus on Gaza and the West Bank in the report as compared to its discussion of the situation of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic.

30. Israel shared the hope for better lives for the Palestinian people. It was therefore deeply disheartening that the unwillingness of the Palestinian leadership to resume direct negotiations with Israel without preconditions, the real reason for the stalemate concerning their situation, had been neglected in the Committee's discussions.

31. Many Palestine refugees were caught in the chaos of unstable Middle Eastern countries. Those in the Syrian Arab Republic risked death and displacement due to the bloody civil war, while the Palestinian population in Lebanon had been segregated and isolated from the rest of Lebanese society for generations. Many representatives of Arab countries had expressed their concern about the situation of Palestine refugees, yet their Governments preferred to cynically exploit those refugees for political purposes rather than provide assistance. In that connection, it was worth noting that nine of the Agency's top ten donors in 2014 were Western countries.

32. It was regrettable that reckless and inflammatory allegations had been made against Israel by the representatives of certain Arab States while thousands of Palestinians were being massacred by the Syrian regime, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and terrorist groups such as Hezbollah. He encouraged UNRWA to contribute more effectively to a peaceful

future for the region by adopting a more constructive approach based on permanent solutions rather than biased resolutions.

33. **Ms. Wilson** (Australia) said that UNRWA had continued to fulfil its mandate in an increasingly volatile regional context in 2015. The large-scale movements of people resulting from the humanitarian crisis in Syria, Iraq and other countries in the region had made the daily work of the Agency more difficult and placed competing demands on donor contributions.

34. Welcoming the Commissioner-General's strategic approach and efforts to bring the private sector into the Agency's work, including through microfinance and technical and vocational education and training, as supporting economic activity and providing long-term benefits for the Palestinian people, she also commended the Agency's innovative solutions to difficult problems, such as reducing the cost of health services while ensuring continuous care. The Commissioner-General's commitment to putting UNRWA on a firmer financial footing reassured the donor community, which was well aware of the gap between the Agency's obligations and its resources. Her delegation praised the Agency's comprehensive humanitarian response to the situation in Gaza in 2014 as well as its longer-term agenda for reconstruction there. Australia had been a financial contributor to UNRWA since 1952; its contributions would total $A 19.3 million by the end of the current financial year.

35. UNRWA was providing essential services to the Palestinian people. However, the future of Palestine refugees must ultimately be determined by a political solution. Australia remained committed to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine coexisting side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

36. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa), commending UNRWA for its work to ensure protection, human development and humanitarian services throughout the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, said that the Agency was almost the only organization continuing to deliver basic services to Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in a context complicated by the continued illegal blockade. It had also had to intervene to attempt to mitigate the impact of the Syrian civil war and growing ISIL-caused instability on the displaced Palestinian population.

37. UNRWA would require sufficient and predictable funding to continue its important work. Unfortunately, funds provided by Member States had not kept pace with increasing needs on the ground, resulting in a large deficit in the Agency's core funding. Having relied on emergency donations, primarily from Arab States, to reopen its schools and vocational training centres in August 2015, the Agency had required further emergency donations to raise $720 million to repair the damage caused by Israeli military action in Gaza in 2014. It had nevertheless made an effort to ensure cost-efficiency and effectiveness while delivering core essential services.

38. South Africa was deeply concerned about the worsening security and humanitarian conditions of Palestine refugees affected by the Syrian conflict and ISIL activities. It commended States hosting Palestinians, but noted with concern that those refugees were becoming increasingly marginalized in their host countries. The international community must work to address the worsening situation for Palestine refugees and support UNRWA and States in the region whose resources were being severely stretched by the tide of refugees fleeing war and persecution.

39. The Agency's mandate would continue until the achievement of a just and lasting peace, which must include the right of return and fair compensation on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). The only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a negotiated settlement of a two-State solution within internationally recognized borders based on those existing prior to 4 June 1967. South Africa urged donors to consistently provide the necessary financial support to the Agency.

40. **Mr. Wongveerasin** (Thailand) recognizing the courageous and crucial work carried out by UNRWA personnel, expressed condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives in the exercise of their duties in an increasingly challenging environment. He called on all parties to respect the civilian nature of refugee camps, facilitate access to humanitarian assistance for those in need and ensure the safety and security of UNRWA personnel.

41. The Agency's financial crisis had affected the operation of 700 schools and vocational training centres. Furthermore, significant funds were still required for the reconstruction of Gaza following the violence of 2014. Member States should provide

continued and sustained support to the Agency and respond more effectively to the needs of Palestine refugees. His Government had provided a modest but regular contribution since 1978 and had contributed $100,000 to the Agency's flash appeal for Gaza and an additional $100,000 to the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Thailand encouraged the parties concerned to make every effort to resolve the conflict and stood ready to support international efforts to bring lasting peace, security and prosperity to the region.

42. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan) said that until Israel and an independent State of Palestine existed side-by-side in peace and security, UNRWA would continue to be a principal source of relief and services to Palestine refugees and a bulwark of stability in an increasingly volatile region. His delegation was concerned that such an important Agency was obliged to operate under recurring budgetary constraints and in increasingly dangerous conditions. Reiterating Japan's appreciation for the dedication and courage of UNRWA staff and expressing condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives in discharging their duties, he called on all concerned actors to facilitate the immediate release of staff members who were still missing or detained. In that regard, all parties should provide unfettered access and protection to the Agency and its staff in the implementation of its mandate.

43. Japan welcomed UNRWA's promising cost-efficiency measures and efforts to expand its donor base. He urged the Agency to continue to explore new funding sources, including international and regional financial institutions. However, he stressed that cost-cutting efforts should not come at the expense of essential relief operations and core services such as education.

44. His Government had contributed $45 million in 2014 and an additional $5.7 million in food in October 2015. It had also supported host countries bilaterally and through UNRWA. He reiterated his Government's appreciation for the efforts of those countries and encouraged them to keep their borders open to Palestine refugees fleeing conflict.

45. While the provision of basic services was essential, it was not the ultimate goal; the international community's assistance should also involve helping Palestinians to lead dignified and fulfilling lives. The educational opportunities of Palestinian children and youth must not be endangered by a lack of funds. Japan would continue to contribute to education and employment initiatives and to promote development through such initiatives as the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development. Humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons must be allowed to pass more freely into Gaza, as the ongoing blockade was hindering reconstruction and exacting a heavy toll on economic prospects in the region. Japan would therefore continue to strengthen its cooperation with UNRWA, not only to provide humanitarian relief but also to help fulfil the aspirations of every refugee to peace, hope and dignity.

46. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that arbitrary measures and restrictions imposed by Israel, including forced evictions, the destruction of homes and economic assets, the separation wall, settler violence, the ongoing blockade of Gaza, and restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, had exacerbated the political, social and economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and hampered the ability of UNRWA to perform its duties.

47. Despite the Agency's ongoing attempts to overcome its financial difficulties by adopting innovative strategies and comprehensive reforms, including as part of the current medium-term strategy for 2016-2021, its long-accumulated deficit continued to threaten its core services. The Agency's current financial difficulties should not eclipse its many remarkable achievements to date, including its essential role in promoting dignity and stability in its fields of operation. He called for efforts to secure additional funding to allow the Agency to function effectively and expressed gratitude to all donors who had responded to its previous appeals for funding, in particular the Arab States that had made generous donations earlier that year to enable half a million Palestinian children to return to UNRWA schools.

48. The question of Palestine refugees was not only a humanitarian issue, but was intrinsically linked to the political conflict in the region. While the Agency played a vital role in providing assistance to Palestine refugees, it was powerless to reach a solution to their plight while they continued to be denied their legitimate right of return as recognized by General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

49. **Mr. Habib** (Indonesia) said that some Palestine refugees, who had been robbed of their homeland, were

now regrettably trapped in the prolonged conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. UNRWA's increasingly violent and unstable operating environment gave cause for great concern, and Indonesia reiterated its strong condemnation of the Israeli aggression in Gaza in 2014 that had resulted in damage to several UNRWA schools and education facilities and caused the deaths of a number of refugees and UNRWA officials. Noting that the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into certain incidents in the Gaza Strip between 8 July 2014 and 26 August 2014 (S/2015/286) had not addressed the issue of accountability for those actions, he encouraged the international community to support Palestinian efforts to hold Israeli officials criminally accountable, in order to prevent the recurrence of such violations and to strengthen international commitment to the rule of law.

50. It was deeply regrettable that the Agency's unexpected financial difficulties had forced it to reduce its services to Palestine refugees, which could have a particularly negative impact on women, children and persons with disabilities. Indonesia therefore suggested that the Agency should assess the situation of the most vulnerable groups of refugees and determine the necessary response.

51. The funding shortage, in combination with armed conflict, instability and extremism in the Middle East, had caused the situation of Palestine refugees to deteriorate. The United Nations must become more proactive and intensify its efforts to bring peace and stability to the region. It should also address the continuing Israeli occupation, the root cause of the suffering of the Palestinian people. As the body primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the United Nations must, as a matter of urgency, establish the necessary conditions for the process towards the achievement of a just and lasting settlement based on the two-State solution. In the meantime, the international community should continue to provide support and assistance to UNRWA. Indonesia had long been a strong supporter of UNRWA and was also supporting Palestine through its participation in the Conference on Cooperation among East Asian Countries for Palestinian Development (CEAPAD), which was implementing programmes in the areas of tourism, agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprises and infrastructure in order to help Palestine prepare itself for statehood.

52. **Mr. Gunnarsson** (Iceland) said that, with all five of its fields of operation affected by armed conflict or deteriorating humanitarian situations, UNRWA was faced with a situation that it was not tasked to address. The conflict in Syria had increased the humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in that country and caused thousands to become internally displaced or flee the country. Increasing numbers of children were becoming displaced, orphaned, or losing their lives trying to reach safety. It was estimated that over 3 million children in Syria alone were unable to attend school. Under those extremely difficult circumstances, the assistance and protection provided by courageous UNRWA staff were more important than ever. He also commended countries in the region that had taken in the majority of refugees fleeing Syria. For its part, his Government had allocated an additional $16 million to support the work of the United Nations on the ground and to welcome increased numbers of refugees to Iceland.

53. The Agency's reliable education, health, relief, social and infrastructure development services were providing a measure of stability in a region consumed by armed conflict, growing extremism and increasing security threats, and giving hope and dignity to millions of young people. Iceland especially commended UNRWA's efforts to improve the lives of women and youth among the Palestine refugee population.

54. The Agency's continuing financial instability was compounding its difficulties. UNRWA would continue to be desperately needed until a just and lasting solution was found to the question of the refugees. In the meantime, the international community must make every effort to honour its responsibilities towards that population. His Government would continue to support UNRWA and encouraged other Member States to do likewise.

55. **Mr. Ntwaagae** (Botswana) said that his country attached great importance to the principle of self-determination and, therefore, remained deeply concerned that the Palestinian people continued to be denied their inalienable right to independence, which undermined the noble principles on which the United Nations was founded. His delegation remained convinced that there was no alternative to the two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine coexisting side-by-side as two sovereign States.

56. His delegation deplored the continuing human rights violations taking place in the Middle East, in particular between Israelis and Palestinians, leading to the loss of many innocent lives and leaving thousands of innocent people without homes, access to basic amenities, or hope for the future. He commended the efforts of UNRWA in providing humanitarian assistance to more than 5 million Palestine refugees in the occupied territories despite financial and resource challenges. Member States and the United Nations system were providing admirable support to ensure the continued operation of the Agency. Botswana also welcomed the continued efforts of the Secretary-General, the Quartet and the Security Council for their efforts to facilitate the peace process. While those efforts should be fully supported by all States, Israel and Palestine must also demonstrate the will to shape their own future and put an end to the protracted conflict. He therefore encouraged them to resume negotiations, in a spirit of compromise and mutual respect, with a view to achieving a lasting solution.

57. He called for an end to the horrific and dehumanizing living conditions that innocent Palestinian civilians continued to endure and that had driven millions to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, and paid tribute to the sacrifices of UNRWA staff working to improve the lives of Palestine refugees in very difficult and dangerous circumstances.

58. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that, 65 years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 302 (IV), an amicable solution to the Palestine question unfortunately had not been found. Instead, the problem had worsened over time, and UNRWA was facing unprecedented operational challenges. Given the uncertainty and ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, the Agency's critical assistance to the Palestine refugees had assumed even greater significance. Its continued and dedicated pursuit of its mandate had come to epitomize the international community's commitment to the well-being of the Palestine refugees. That it did so under extremely difficult conditions was all the more admirable. That commitment included providing emergency assistance to more than 1.3 million Palestine refugees in acute distress as a result of armed conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in neighbouring countries. India also acknowledged and commended the invaluable cooperation of host countries.

59. His delegation supported a negotiated solution for a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, within secure and recognized borders, side-by-side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Arab Peace Initiative, the Quartet road map and relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. His country's political support for the Palestinian people, highlighted by the recent inaugural visit of the Indian President to Palestine, was matched by its consistent technical and financial assistance for development and nation-building efforts. The President had announced more scholarships for Palestinian students under the flagship Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, inaugurated the India-Palestine Centre for Excellence in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Al-Quds University, and donated $5 million as budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. As part of the country's larger capacity-building initiatives in Palestine, there were plans to establish another ICT centre in Gaza, an IT park in Ramallah and a Palestinian Institute of Diplomacy, at an estimated cost of $1 million, $12 million and $4.5 million respectively. India continued to contribute $1 million annually to UNRWA and had fulfilled its pledge of $4 million to the National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza. Furthermore, it was jointly implementing development projects in Palestine with Brazil and South Africa, and had pledged $1 million for a new project to reconstruct the Atta Habib medical centre in Gaza.

60. Dialogue was the only viable option in the search for a just, durable and comprehensive peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue. Diplomacy and statesmanship had to prevail over hatred and violence; there was no other road to a lasting peace. All parties should show restraint to avoid provocation and unilateral actions and resume the peace process.

61. **Mr. AlKhubaizi** (Kuwait) said that Israel, the occupying Power, bore primary responsibility for the tragic situation of the Palestine refugees. It had systematically destroyed Palestinian infrastructure and continued to violate the Palestinian people's most fundamental human rights. During its military assault on Gaza in July 2014, Israel had killed and injured thousands of Palestinian civilians, most of them women and children, destroyed buildings and infrastructure and forced vast numbers of Palestinians to flee their homes and seek refuge in UNRWA

facilities, many of which had also been targeted by Israeli attacks. Israel continued to expand settlements, its security forces used live ammunition in crowded civilian areas and settler violence remained unpunished, including attacks such as that of 31 July 2015, when the home of a Palestinian family in Nablus was deliberately set on fire, killing a young infant and other family members. The international community must take immediate and decisive action to compel Israel to stop obstructing the Agency's vital work and lift its Gaza blockade in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The international community must also refrain from applying double standards and fulfil its moral and political duty to hold Israel accountable for its crimes.

62. The Agency's financial difficulties posed a serious threat to the future of its operations. While his delegation appreciated the Agency's efforts to streamline expenditure, it was concerned about the potential effect of such measures on the level of service the Agency provided. All States must continue to support UNRWA's valuable work, which contributed to regional stability.

63. Kuwait remained fully committed to UNRWA; it had increased its annual contribution to $2 million in 2011 and made additional donations amounting to tens of millions of dollars to support the Agency's response to the ongoing humanitarian crises in Gaza and the Syrian Arab Republic. In 2014, Kuwait had pledged $200 million to support reconstruction in Gaza over a period of three years, and in 2015 it had donated an additional $15 million to fund the reopening of UNRWA schools. His Government reaffirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people and its support for their inalienable rights.

64. **Mr. Raja Zaib Shah** (Malaysia) commended the tireless dedication and hard work of the Commissioner-General and the staff members of UNRWA to improve the conditions of Palestine refugees, despite extreme circumstances and constraints, and expressed its deepest sympathy to the families of staff members killed in the line of duty.

65. The serious shortfall in the General Fund must be addressed urgently. Support for UNRWA during its unprecedented financial crisis in August 2015 had been heartening; the international community's noble commitment to ensure that the hundreds of thousands of children and young people enrolled in the Agency's 685 schools and 8 vocational training centres continued to enjoy the basic right to education must be sustained. Malaysia, as a non-traditional donor, remained firmly committed to assisting the Palestine refugees through its regular and one-time contributions to UNRWA and supported the Agency's efforts to mobilize contributions from the international community. All Member States must increase and sustain their contributions to the Agency's work.

66. Despite the outpouring of support, the recent extreme violence and hostilities in East Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank continued to stifle livelihoods in Gaza and prevented the entry of much-needed construction materials as well as hampering care and support for women, orphaned children and persons with disabilities. The deliberate worsening of conditions by the occupying Power in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, threatened the very survival of the Palestinian people, including Palestine refugees sheltered in UNRWA camps. Malaysia called once again for an end to the blockade and the lifting of restrictions on the movement of UNRWA personnel and goods in the West Bank and Gaza, which continued to undermine the Agency's execution of its mandate. The international community must exhort all those responsible to act urgently to remove the restrictions in accordance with international law and agreements among UNRWA, the State of Palestine and Israel.

67. The humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to provoke grave concern, particularly with regard to the hundreds of thousands of Palestine refugees under the Agency's care. The important role of UNRWA in forestalling a more alarming humanitarian disaster in that country deserved the full support of the international community. The Agency's vital work tangibly demonstrated the ongoing concern and sympathy for the plight of Palestine refugees deprived of justice, human rights and fundamental freedoms. Despite many operational challenges, UNRWA had done much to improve the lives of the Palestine refugees in Gaza and the West Bank and in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. It was the shared responsibility of the international community to provide the resources needed for the Agency to fulfil its mandate effectively.

68. **Mr. Bosah** (Nigeria), noting that since its inception UNRWA had been providing, within the limits of its meagre resources, basic humanitarian services to an increasing population of Palestine

refugees, said that the prolonged armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic not only exacerbated the difficulties of the refugees there, but also placed additional pressures on the Agency's resources. With Palestine refugees in the Near East facing high levels of food insecurity, unemployment and poverty, Nigeria applauded the Agency's offer of full-time employment to some 30,000 refugees as a means of injecting income into local communities.

69. Given that most of the Agency's funds came from voluntary contributions, its ability to fulfil its mandate was severely affected by the gross funding shortfall. Limited financial resources undermined UNRWA programmes in such critical sectors as health, education, social services, and emergency response. Nigeria welcomed the Agency's commitment to manage costs while retaining its capacity to achieve its strategic objectives with maximum impact within its resources, and without compromising essential services. The Agency's fundraising efforts, including the Commissioner-General's proposal to explore avenues for more sustainable funding, were also appreciated. His delegation endorsed the UNRWA Resource Mobilization Strategy for 2012-2015 which aimed to deepen partnerships with traditional donors and to improve cross-Agency capacity to mobilize resources and manage donor relations.

70. Through the resolute commitment and tireless efforts of its staff, UNRWA had notably continued to deliver on its mandate despite its huge financial challenges. While donors and other agencies had already contributed much, it was critical to work collectively to ensure that UNRWA received the funding necessary to maintain its operations and continue providing humanitarian services.

71. **Mr. Djacta** (Algeria), thanking the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for his remarkable work and the quality and objectivity of his reports and staff, expressed profound concern at the scope of the Agency's persistent financial problem, whose only victims were those who lived in overpopulated camps with the collective memory of a nation they had been forced to abandon. The United Nations had established UNRWA in an attempt to expunge its direct responsibility for the exodus of Palestinians with a mandate to assist those whom Israel had forced into exile, denying them their livelihood and dignity as free human beings. His country valued and supported the Agency, whose essential mandate to provide humanitarian assistance and technical support to Palestine refugees in the Occupied Territories and in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria must be preserved. Its operational capacity must be developed until the achievement of a just and lasting solution to the plight of Palestine refugees, including the right of return and the right to compensation pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 and subsequent resolutions.

72. He reiterated his delegation's deep concern over the critical situation of Palestine refugees as documented in the Commissioner-General's report. The negative effect of the occupation on the daily lives of refugees continued, as they faced existential threats and sank deeper into poverty and depression. The Agency's work to address poverty, health care and other development issues merited support, for a weakened UNRWA would not only destabilize a region in turmoil, but would also contradict the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The unprecedented and inhumane Israeli blockade had already crippled the Gazan economy and affected the lives of its civilian population. Furthermore, by continuing to prevent UNRWA personnel from discharging their duties and systematically restricting the movement of people and goods needed for the reconstruction of thousands of homes and buildings destroyed by its aggressions, Israel perpetuated dependence on UNRWA. Algeria also expressed concern with regard to the situation of Palestine refugees in Syria.

73. The Agency's budget shortfall undermined its efforts to meet refugees' needs. Its financial viability was a collective responsibility, and until a just and lasting solution to the plight of Palestine refugees was achieved, donors must deliver and remain committed to ensuring that the Agency was able to fulfil its mandate. He also called on the international community to intensify efforts to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, put an end to the Israeli occupation, and find a just solution for the Palestine refugee problem in line with the principles of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

74. **Mr. Almahmoud** (United Arab Emirates) commended UNRWA personnel for their dedicated efforts to provide basic services to Palestine refugees, who continued to endure immense suffering under the Israeli occupation. The Agency's current unprecedented budget shortfall of $101 million severely inhibited its ability to deal with the rising numbers of refugees and

the deteriorating humanitarian situation, exacerbated by Israel's deliberate destruction of Palestinians' homes and confiscation of their property, and by the deliberate targeting of refugee camps in Syria. Of particular concern was the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in the Yarmouk camp, the majority of whose inhabitants had been displaced, and where those who remained continued to suffer flagrant violations of international law, including an unjust blockade and frequent acts of terrorism.

75. His Government called on the United Nations to end the suffering of the Palestinian people, compel Israel to respect its obligations under international agreements, hold Israel accountable for its crimes and provide the necessary protection to Palestine refugees. It also urged the international community, in particular donor States and financial institutions, to increase their financial contributions to UNRWA to enable it to fulfil its crucial functions.

76. The United Arab Emirates was a long-standing donor of regular and emergency assistance to UNRWA. Its annual contribution was $1.8 million; it had donated an additional $15 million in response to the Agency's funding crisis to ensure that UNRWA schools were not forced to delay the start of the 2015 academic year. It had also been the third biggest donor in response to the emergency appeal in Syria in 2014. In addition to providing financial support, the Emirates had joined the UNRWA Advisory Commission and the Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to UNRWA, set up an air bridge to deliver in-kind assistance to refugees affected by the 2014 Gaza conflict, pledged $200 million at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, hosted a regional conference on protecting refugee children in the Middle East and North Africa, and cooperated with UNRWA in launching an education programme to help children in Gaza to deal with the psychological effects of war.

77. His Government reaffirmed the need to continue the Agency's mandate and stressed that the problem of Palestine refugees could only be fundamentally resolved by compelling Israel to abide by international law, in particular General Assembly resolution 194 (III). To conclude, he paid tribute to UNRWA staff, in particular those who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

78. **Mr. Carroll** (Observer for the Holy See), extending condolences to the families of UNRWA staff killed while providing humanitarian aid to the victims of conflict and political turmoil or injured in the line of duty, said that reports on the issues confronting UNRWA painted a very troubling picture. The areas under the Agency's responsibility included territories where Christians had been part and parcel of the culture and history of the region for two millennia. Greatly reduced in number, and forced to leave their homes by violent persecution and the harsh geopolitical realities of the region, they were among the refugees served by UNRWA. Like UNRWA, the Catholic Church provided — through a number of its bodies and the support of generous donors — education, health-care and social services to internally displaced persons and refugees, and rehabilitation for those traumatized by incessant conflict, all on the basis of need, not creed.

79. Resources that did not match ever-increasing needs; a stalled peace process between Israel and Palestine; and ever-increasing tensions and violence in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem were issues of grave concern to the Holy See. The Holy City of Jerusalem was the spiritual patrimony of the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. His delegation, therefore, renewed its support for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem, ensuring, inter alia, the freedom of religion and conscience of its inhabitants, as well as free and unhindered access to the holy places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities.

80. In the Syrian Arab Republic, where education and health-care facilities were being targeted by warring parties, some children had been unable to attend school for two or three years because of the use and abuse of schools by all parties, and as the number of injured victims increased, the number of facilities to care for them diminished. Some refugee camps, such as Yarmouk, were literally under siege with limited access to basic human needs, and Palestine refugees must flee again. The reports gave no hope of an expedient end to the many barbaric acts against the Palestine refugees.

81. He reiterated with appreciation, however, the enduring collaboration of Lebanon and Jordan with UNRWA and commended them, together with Turkey and some European countries, for dealing with the influx of refugees from both Iraq and Syria. Lebanon,

in particular, needed support from the international community to stabilize its institutions, protect its citizens and tend to some 1.5 million refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. Jordan, long a beacon in the acceptance of refugees, required international assistance to tend to refugees and to guarantee security and social cohesion for its own people, fending off the spiral of violence that terrorist and extremist groups sought to inflict.

82. Peacemaking must replace the counterproductive illogic of violence and war. Accessible humanitarian assistance for refugees and internally displaced persons must replace the current influx of weapons into the region from all over the globe. The hope must never die that peace would eventually take root in a land significant to all and sacred to many.

83. **Mr. Krähenbühl** (Commissioner-General of UNRWA) welcomed the support voiced and demonstrated by United Nations Member States, hosts and donor countries, and commended the Chair and Rapporteur of the Working Group on the Financing of UNRWA for the report. The recognition of the Agency's important humanitarian assistance, development work and investment in human capital, and of its strategic approach to operations and financing were appreciated. He also welcomed the recognition of the role, courage and determination of staff and the security issues and threats they faced in Gaza or the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as the resolution adopted on safety and security, which also took into account locally recruited or Palestinian staff who did not fall under the responsibility of the Department of Safety and Security.

84. It was true that the financial shortfall that UNRWA had overcome — with the help of many delegations — should never occur again, and that States had an individual and collective responsibility in that regard. Reiterating that UNRWA would have to undertake serious reform and Member States should continue to provide diplomatic and financial support for the Agency to address the many needs of the Palestine refugees, he also stressed that UNRWA's ongoing assistance could not be a substitute for the essential solutions required, and that while it would continue to provide education in its 685 schools, youth unemployment remained a key factor to be addressed in more innovative ways.

85. He would continue the important bilateral dialogue in which, despite the many areas of disagreement that might exist between the State of Israel and the Agency, issues could be addressed in sustained and in-depth conversations at various levels. At the same time, regarding the query by the Israeli representative about the high number of refugees registered by the Agency, it was important to note that UNRWA defined refugee status so differently from other agencies. While family members of Afghan refugees living in Pakistan or the Islamic Republic of Iran were also entitled to refugee status, the difference was that, unlike Palestinians, they had a country to which they could return; that right, enshrined in resolution 194, continued to elude Palestine refugees. The Agency's work towards a just and lasting solution that was part of a political process, and included the return of refugees to their place of origin, was in line with the approach of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

86. He also emphasized that the Agency had no difficulty in addressing the role and activities of Hamas. During the 2014 conflict, he had condemned the firing of rockets on Israeli cities and civilians, not from the relative safety of his apartment in East Jerusalem, but from Gaza itself. The idea that UNRWA relegated or minimized the suffering of Palestine refugees in any one situation was foreign to him. He had never hesitated to condemn the Yarmouk camp incidents, nor would he hesitate to condemn the consequences of the siege imposed on Yarmouk or the actions of armed groups inside the camp. The true strength of international law and international humanitarian law resided not so much in the effort of any one State to impugn others, as in how seriously it applied international law domestically. Accountability began at home, and that would apply equally to the State of Israel with regard to its responsibilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He repeated that the enquiries into the allegations concerning inappropriate content and statements posted by UNRWA staff on social media were ongoing. The Agency unambiguously condemned any form of anti-Semitism or racism and would conclude its investigations into the matter, taking disciplinary action where appropriate. In the same way, the Agency looked forward to the conclusions of the investigations carried out by the State of Israel into numerous incidents affecting Palestine refugees that had occurred during the conflict in Gaza and in 2015 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

87. He fully concurred with the many representatives who had stated that the need for a political solution was central to the issue. He stressed, however, that it was not the frequency of such statements or of references to the importance of a two-State solution, but political action on the ground that was needed to lead to concrete changes. Notwithstanding comments that had been made, UNRWA had no political mandate. It was vital to understand that nothing would address the frustrations, despair and anger that were currently visible in many parts of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza if political action were not pushed forward. The Agency would continue to advocate in that regard and remain dedicated to its humanitarian and development mandate because it was confronted daily with the human cost of political inaction that had endured for far too long. Many dreamed of a world in which UNRWA was not needed, but the wide show of support for the Agency's activities sent a message of solidarity to Palestine refugees and reaffirmed its mandate. He urged delegations to bear in mind that supporting UNRWA was providing a measure of hope, dignity and stability to the region. Quoting from a poem on hope and happiness by a young girl from Gaza, he said that it was important to remember that, behind the statistics, Palestine refugees, in particular children, shared the same hopes for dignity and humanity as children everywhere.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

88. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation must first reiterate that the right of return was precisely that — a right, not a claim. That irrevocable right, enshrined in resolution 194, was based on international law and the principles of justice and equality. The rights of Palestinians were no different from those of any other refugees: it would be unimaginable to refuse the right of a certain group of refugees to return on the grounds that they did not belong to a specific religion or ethnic group. Such a position was incompatible with her delegation's understanding of human rights and justice, an understanding which was widely shared, as evidenced by the Committee's discussions. The Israeli Government's rejectionist rhetoric and intransigence on that point were at the core of the continuing conflict. However, despite the rejection, oppression or humiliation to which the Palestinian people had been subjected in the 67 years since Al-Nakba and over two decades of negotiations, they would never be forced into forgoing their rights.

89. Second, the Israeli Government must understand that rights and security were not exclusive to Israel and that it was not a zero-sum game. Without fulfilment of the rights of the Palestinian people, peace and security would remain elusive. International law, including humanitarian and human-rights law, and United Nations resolutions were therefore the basis for any just and lasting solution. The term "no preconditions" was an attempt to detach negotiations from international law and any framework that could possibly ensure justice and, thus, a viable peace. If the demand for preconditions was considered an obstruction of peace, then it was not just Palestine, but the entire international community that was mistaken.

90. Third, UNRWA did not promote a so-called "one-sided narrative"; its mandate, conferred by the General Assembly, was clear and based on international humanitarian and human-rights law. That had been broadly and firmly recognized in statement after statement before the Committee, in the many welcome expressions of support for the Agency and for the 5.5 million Palestine refugees registered with it.

91. Lastly, her delegation would submit that the question of Palestine, including the Palestine refugee question, was the moral-justice issue of the day. To minimize it would be to ignore and belittle how deeply the issue resonated around the world and how relevant a just, peaceful solution was, not just for the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and the wider region, but for the international community and for the viability of the international system as a whole.

92. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Yarmouk camp was not under blockade by the Syrian Government; that fact had been confirmed by the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/20/37) and by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs in a statement before the Security Council. Yarmouk camp had in fact been blockaded internally by terrorist groups, which had stormed the camp and provoked instability there for decades.

93. It was ridiculous for the representative of Israel to comment on human rights, peace or the situation of Palestine refugees when Israel bore sole responsibility for their misery; it had massacred and forcibly

displaced vast numbers of Palestinians and continued to terrorize them on a daily basis, denying them even their most basic rights, including the right of return. In the Gaza Strip, Israel obstructed the entry of humanitarian assistance, maintained its unjust and inhumane blockade and had carried out devastating attacks on places of refuge, including UNRWA facilities, killing Agency staff and many innocent civilians.

94. The representative of Israel, having listened to a torrent of international condemnation of the Israeli Government throughout the debate on the current agenda item, had regrettably resorted to making his usual defamatory accusations against the Syrian Government in a futile bid to divert attention from the war crimes committed daily by the Israeli Government in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

95. If the representative of Israel were genuinely concerned about the situation of Palestine refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, rather than shedding false tears at the United Nations, he should simply request his Government to allow Palestinians to exercise their right of return, end its occupation of Palestine and stop providing support to terrorist groups such as the Nusra Front that were active in the separation area in the occupied Syrian Golan, as reported by the Secretary General in his most recent report on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) (S/2015/699), particularly since those were the same terrorist groups that had invaded Yarmouk camp.

Agenda item 53: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space (*continued*)
(A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1, A/C.4/70/L.13 and A/C.4/70/L.13/Corr.1)

Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1: Matters relating to activities under the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in 2016

96. **The Chair** invited the Committee to resume its consideration of item 53 and to take action on the remaining draft resolution under that item. He recalled that at the fifteenth meeting of the Committee, the representative of the Chair of the Working Group of the Whole on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space had reported on the discussions in that Group, including on discussions relating to draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1. A statement on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution had been issued as documents A/C.4/70/L.13 and A/C.4/70/L.13/Corr.1.

97. *Draft resolution A/C.4/70/L.9/Rev.1 was adopted.*

98. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan) said that his delegation had been pleased to join the consensus on the resolution. As a strong supporter of international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space, Japan fully understood the benefits of capacity-building activities under the United Nations programme. However, his delegation regretted the programme budget implications of the resolution and the lack of clarity on the budget throughout the process. Japan hoped that upcoming discussions in the Fifth Committee would provide an opportunity to shed further light on the issue.

99. **Mr. Testot** (France) said that his delegation associated itself with the position of the previous speaker, as France had always supported international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space and the omnibus resolutions adopted every year on that agenda item. The confusion surrounding the current programme budget implications was, therefore, regrettable. France took note of the Secretariat's welcome efforts to elucidate the matter during and after discussions in the Committee and hoped that its subsequent consideration in the Fifth Committee would lead to further clarification, including on the possible reprioritization of seminars for the biennium 2016-2017.

100. **Mr. Sherry** (United Kingdom) expressed his delegation's concern regarding the lack of clarity in discussions on future and past workshops and the subsequent need for additional resources. He also expressed concern that there had been no attempt to reprioritize activity for the upcoming biennium within a budget that had not yet even been adopted, even though the budget proposal included provisions for 11 workshops, the locations of which were yet to be decided. The adoption of the draft resolution in no way prejudged discussion in the Fifth Committee of the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the next biennium.

101. **Mr. Ordeman** (United States), voicing his country's support for the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), including the four workshops listed in the draft resolution, said that he wished to remind the Committee that all of the complications surrounding the resolution — including the added work undertaken by the Secretariat, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs and the

sponsor of the draft resolution — had been the result of the efforts by some to politicize the work of COPUOS. The unnecessary politicization of a technical committee had led to the reallocation of the funds earmarked for those workshops in the current biennium and had incurred programme budget implications for the upcoming biennium because those activities had not been included in the resolution that had been adopted without programme budget implications.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.